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THE COHORT SYSTEM — IS IT MEETING THE ARMY'S NEEDS?

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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CHAPTER I

A NEW SOLUTION TO AN OLD PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

For centuries now armies throughout the world have studied the art of fighting wars. They have analyzed the people, equipment, tactics, and leadership, always trying to come up with the best organizations in order to maximize fighting efficiency. Analysts can find successes and failures in these efforts, but certain principles consistently come to the front. One of these is that men who go into battle and fight as a cohesive team always produce better results. One specific example of this principle of the soldiers' determination to fight being so totally dependent on his relationship with his comrades was described by Edward Shills and Morris Janowitz in their book Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II:

It appears that a soldier's ability to resist is a function of the capacity of his immediate primary group (his squad or section) to avoid social disintegration. When the individual's immediate group, and its supporting formations, met his basic organic needs, offered him affection and esteem from both officers and comrades, supplied him with a sense of power, authority, the element of self-concern in battle, which would lead to the disruption of the effective functioning of his primary group, was minimized.¹

It is rare to find a soldier that fights well on his own. There are a few examples that can be offered: Saupson, who slew Philistines by the hundreds; Audley Murphy who killed great numbers of Germans and destroyed large quantities of Nazi equipment single handedly. Case studies are much more common that describe small units fighting with a cohesive, aggressive spirit and defeating far superior forces.² These small units were made up of

fighting men who were bonded together by their spirit of selfless service, fighting for the same cause, and committed to the survival and well being of their mates in the unit. They were given the time to train together and learn each others strengths and weaknesses. In most cases there seems to be some kind of a common thread among these groups in the assurance that they were doing what was in the best interest of their families. This includes both their family back home and their extended family -- the unit.

Many of the great generals have tried to capture the essence of this very important combat multiplier called "unit cohesion." It has been labeled with many different names and descriptions, but in all these, the advantage always turned out to be the same. It is reported that at some time during his command of the French armies, Napoleon said:

... success on the battlefield is dependent on morale (esprit, elan) rather than physical resources by a three to one margin.³

An argument can be made that the ratio is not correct or that it can only be applied to a lesser degree when one considers the intensity of modern battle and the lethality of modern weapons. Even so, it is certainly a critical element of unit effectiveness.⁴

COHORT BEGINNINGS

Knowledge of the need to form cohesive combat units has not just dawned on the leaders of the U.S. Army. Indeed, there have been many different programs initiated throughout the history of the Army intended to improve cohesion in tactical units.⁵ Some of these efforts were very successful, and some fell victim to difficult times and to other considerations such as growing scarcities of men and money.⁶ The first General of the Army, General George

Washington, noted the importance of cohesion in military units when he remarked to Henry Knox, his Chief of Artillery:

My first wish would be that my military family, and the whole Army, should consider themselves as a band of brothers, willing and ready to die for each other.⁷

The Army's most recent experiment in the field of influencing the behavior of teams was launched in the early 1980's. This program was an experimental model which allowed the Army personnel system a means of providing replacements to units in the field using a new methodology. The system being used at the time was the old individual soldier replacement known to the Army since World War II. The new model called for replacement of required personnel by unit packages.⁸ This new approach was called the New Manning system (NMS), Cohesion Operational Readiness and Training (COHORT) model.

The Army experiment with the COHORT model was born out of efforts to design personnel management systems that would help to increase unit cohesion within units. Earlier Army studies noted the possible advantages of various forms of regimental unit replacement models. Additionally, there were lessons drawn from the British Army experience with their regimental system.⁹

In its basic form, the COHORT model sought to create an environment in which soldiers would feel a more genuine attachment to their fellow soldiers and to their units. The soldier's unit would hopefully become his extended family. Soldiers would begin to feel a certain familial trust and confidence in their unit mates and in the ability of their unit leaders. This would, in turn, produce some measure of comfort in living in such an environment. Obviously the ability to produce these conditions is very important for any organization involved in the dangerous business of conflict management. In

his book, Men Against Fire, S.L.A. Marshall describes what makes a soldier keep fighting:

I hold it to be one of the simplest truths of war that the thing which enables an Infantry soldier to keep going with his weapon is the near presence or the personal presence of a comrade...he is sustained by his fellows...¹⁰

To replicate this kind of finding, of which Marshall is talking, meant that the Army needed more cohesive units and more combat ready battalions. Planners believed that this could be achieved by keeping soldiers together as unit replacement packages from the time they arrived at the reception stations, to their training in basic combat skills, and through the entire three years of their enlistment, in the same COHORT unit. Part of their purpose was to reduce the personnel turbulence suffered by units under the old individual replacement system. Processing individual soldier replacements in and out of units under this old system was practically a daily routine.

LTG Robert M. Elton, in his article in the Army Green Book, 84-85, compares the two systems as follows:

...today's system although efficient, has cost the Army something in terms of identity, allegiance, and the maintenance of tough cohesive units...Soldiers must switch allegiances frequently...efficiencies in individual replacements take no account of unit cohesion in the tank company, cannon battery or the Infantry battalion. Individual replacements result in a constant flow into and out of units.¹¹

The COHORT battalion model was implemented in several different types of units stationed both in the United States and overseas. These included Light Infantry, Airborne Infantry, Mechanized Infantry, Armor, and Field Artillery units. The plan called for all the different types of units to have generally the same three-year life cycle. The chart below summarizes a representative life cycle for those readers not familiar with the process.

THREE-YEAR LIFE CYCLE OF A COHORT UNIT

<u>Month</u>	<u>Activity</u>
1	Soldiers enter One Station Unit Training (OSUT) Cadre of parent unit formed
3-4	Soldiers complete OSUT and report to first duty station COHORT unit formed
12	Top off package arrives to replace unprogrammed losses
15-18	Preparations underway for overseas rotation
18	COHORT unit rotates overseas
22	Top off package arrives overseas to replace unprogrammed losses
33	Replacement soldier package arrives overseas
36	Soldiers separate from active service

Purpose And Thesis

There is ample evidence available to prove that the advantages gained in unit cohesion and combat readiness of COHORT units far outweigh the costs to the Army system of forming these units. Furthermore, as the COHORT and package replacement system expands to more units in The Army, and adjustments are made to the personnel management system to better support the requirements, the costs will become less significant.

I am confident that we have done enough testing and evaluation of the COHORT system. There is plenty of data and testimony to support the recent decisions to continue COHORT and the package replacement system for most combat units.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the positive and negative impacts of the COHORT system on the individual soldier, his family, and his unit. Additionally, material will be presented that shows further impacts on unit leadership and the Army system as a whole.

It is my thesis that the methodology used by the leadership of the Army has driven the COHORT system, for the most part, in the right direction. It is true that there remain some areas of misperception among members of both COHORT and non-COHORT units about the system. However, these misperceptions are easily corrected, and the potential problems they would cause can be headed off by sensitive commanders with effective information programs.

CHAPTER I

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CHAPTER II

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE COHORT SYSTEM

The Army has been experimenting with the COHORT system since 1981. During that time, enough experience has been gained to draw some conclusions about the positive impacts the program has produced. These positive aspects are of the type that prove it to be a viable program and dictate its future survival and expansion.

COHESION

The mission assigned to planners and researchers who designed the COHORT system was: develop a unit personnel replacement model that will give the Army more cohesive, and better trained soldiers, who have confidence in each other, and who will be more likely to withstand the intensity of the first battle of the next war.¹ The COHORT system has definitely accomplished that mission. Soldiers and leaders who have served in and studied different units have consistently found that cohesion is higher in COHORT units. This includes units of all the combat arms which were stationed at posts in the United States and overseas.²

Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) designed a reliable tool for analysis and measurement of the elements of unit cohesion. The measurement used for survey purposes was called "soldier will."

The elements of "soldier will" are:

- Company Combat Confidence
- Senior Command Confidence
- Small-Unit Command Confidence
- Concerned Leadership
- Sense of Pride
- Unit Social Climate
- Unit Teamwork...

COHORT soldiers and units scored consistently better on "soldier will" than did non-COHORT.³

LTC Elton summarized many years of exhaustive study on unit cohesion in his March, 1987, letter to personnel managers wherein he stated, "COHORT units possess a high level of peer cohesion as revealed by many studies and evaluations."⁴ Further testimony concerning cohesion in COHORT units was offered by MG Watts, Commander 1st Infantry Division, in his 1 April, 1987, letter to the Commander U.S. Army Forces Command. This particular piece of correspondence dealt with the commander's evaluation of a COHORT battalion, 2nd Battalion, 5th Field Artillery. In the letter MG Watts stated, "As a concept, I fully support the COHORT and New Manning System Programs and agree that increased cohesion within units is a key by-product."⁵ MG Watts also writes of certain installation-wide costs associated with forming COHORT units. The negative impact associated with these costs will be discussed in Chapter III.

Stabilization

The Army personnel system has managed people by an individual replacement system since 1918. Since that time, units have lived with organizational turbulence caused by unacceptably high personnel turnover. This turbulence has been reported to be as high as one third the total personnel authorized per calendar quarter in some units.⁶ The extreme difficulty with accomplishing any semblance of meaningful, sustained unit level training in these units is obvious. The personnel management policies for units under the COHORT model include bringing soldiers together and forming units that will remain together for a full three year period. The immediate benefit in all this is personnel stability, which, in turn, goes a long way towards solving the turnover problem.

Training

LTC Phipps, a British Army officer and an unbiased observer, offered a rather scathing indictment of the U.S. Army's training proficiency under the individual replacement system. He suggested in his 1982 study that:

The next major war will be a severe test of the effectiveness and sustainability of soldiers on the battlefield. Combat will be prolonged and intensive. Strong leadership, loyalty, discipline, and a high state of training will be essential in order to insure that units stay and fight effectively against heavy opposition. These qualities are lacking at present in the U.S. Army's combat units because of the high level of personnel turbulence. The fault lies primarily with the present individual replacement system because it destroys any stability or cohesion within combat units. Commanders are finding it hard to keep up with training needs, young officers are not given the chance to learn from experience, and enlisted men lack motivation and a stable environment.⁷

WRAIR analyzed brigade and division level competitive events that were designed to assess training performance in thirteen Infantry and Field Artillery battalions. They concluded that COHORT squads/crews and companies/batteries were more motivated and better trained than non-COHORT. Comparing the motivation and teamwork of these COHORT and non-COHORT units, the WRAIR analysts concluded, "COHORT units have broken the often observed cycle of a decline of morale and commitment following completion of basic and advanced training."⁹

Combat Readiness

There are many ways to measure the combat effectiveness of an Army unit. Some are qualitative in nature, such as the competitive training evaluations discussed above. However, others are limited to a commander's subjective judgement. LTC Robin Elder, former commander of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Field Artillery and whose organization was formed under the COHORT model, was very

positive about the way it affected the combat readiness of his battalion. In a March, 1986, letter to his division artillery commander he explained:

There is no doubt that overall readiness has been enhanced by the COHORT concept...Maintenance ER (equipment readiness) continually leads the division. USAREUR is getting a professional, seasoned, disciplined, and well-trained battalion...The benefits to the officer corps cannot be overstated. Captains will be commanding batteries in which they were Lieutenants. Privates will be gunners. Radio telephone operators will be Company Forward Observers. Our depth of leadership will be unequalled by any battalion in the Army.¹⁰

Colonel Zaldo, Elder's Division Artillery Commander, fully supported Elder's strong comments. In his endorsement of Elder's letter to the division commander he stated, "There is no doubt that the COHORT battalion concept makes for a superior unit. The performance of the unit on REFORGER was absolutely spectacular..."¹¹

I served as a COHORT battalion commander (1-41 Infantry) for thirty-three months. This was unquestionably the most personally enjoyable and professionally rewarding experience of twenty years of service. My personal experiences bear testimony to LTC Elder's and COL Zaldo's positive comments concerning how organizations under the COHORT model enhance combat readiness. This seems to hold true under every conceivable measure.

Loyalty

When I compare three years of experience in a COHORT battalion with seventeen years of service in eight non-COHORT battalions, I cannot help but conclude that the COHORT soldiers displayed more loyalty; loyalty to their mates, loyalty to the chain of command, and loyalty to the unit. Few commanders have ever known such rich and abiding loyalty in a unit of this size. The brigade commander, COL Smythe Wood, and the division commander, MG Richard Scholtes, described this as "heartwarming and enthusiastic team

spirit" in the COHORT soldiers of the 1-41 Infantry.

Families

In his White Paper on the family, General John Wickham, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, was very clear about his philosophy concerning caring for families and developing the essential bond between Army units and its families. In it he stated:

Towards the goal of building a strong partnership, the Army remains committed to assuring adequate support to families in order to promote wellness; to develop a sense of community; and to strengthen the mutually reinforcing bonds between the Army and its families...Initiatives to support our families must be developed to minimize the impact of frequent deployments and field training absences.¹²

WRAIR analysts feel that effective unit family programs produce advantages in reduced anxiety, fewer distractions from training, and far less demand by family members on unit rear detachments.¹³

The 1-41 Infantry battalion family program was heralded by WRAIR analyst, LTC James A. Martin, as "the best of all the battalions under study."¹⁴ The study focused on five non-COHORT battalions and the 1-41 Infantry. There was one significant reason that the 1-41 stood out among the others. Everyone in the battalion rallied around a common purpose -- the desire to build and bond a superior COHORT unit. The COHORT focus made it work.

Both the single and married soldiers in the unit saw this as "people helping people." A line in the Army After Action Report on Battalion Rotations summed it up, "There were numerous stories told of unit members (and their families) helping each another before, during, and after the movement."¹⁵

Let the reader think that the notion of family bonding in COHORT units, as described above, is a commander's slanted view, the following evidence is

given, "Interview data suggests that COHORT battalions and company units provide a favorable climate for the emergence of family support activities." Families are more eager under this type of command climate to step forward and volunteer their services to the unit and to each other. They are more likely to see the unit and other families as an extension of their own family.¹⁶

SUMMARY

This chapter has shown that the COHORT model definitely enhanced important combat multipliers for combat arms units in the Army. Units organized under the COHORT model have proven to be cohesive, better trained, and combat ready fighting teams. The chapter has also demonstrated that families of soldiers in COHORT units enjoy a tighter bond with the unit, and are more confident and secure in their surroundings.

CHAPTER II

ENDNOTES

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15. Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, U.S. Army, Battalion Rotation After Action Report, 13 August 1987, p. D-2.

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CHAPTER III

Negative Impacts of the COHORT System

Everything discovered in the studies and research discussed above was not perfect. Obviously, when implementing a program of such sweeping change in a large organization like the U.S. Army, there are bound to be some significant problems. The implementing years of the COHORT system were no exception. In order to provide a balanced approach to this subject, it is important to examine the negative aspects. In addition to discussing these negative impacts, this chapter will address some of the remedies.

Evolving Methodology

The entire period of the experiment with the COHORT model has been characterized by "evolving methodology." The policy guidance from the Army Staff that created this methodology changed all too frequently over the years. This situation caused a considerable amount of frustration for those responsible for execution in the staff agencies at subordinate commands.¹

There were studies done in the hope that they would anticipate potential problems. Just about everyone knew we had to improve our replacement system and do it quickly. The testing had to begin so that the Army could make the correct decisions about where to go with the program. Implementation instructions were issued by the Army leadership with a specified task to field commanders to "fix-as-you-go."

It should not be a surprise to anyone, even remotely familiar with implementing change in large organizations, that you may not get everything

exactly right the first time. That age-old-truth held up in this case as well. Problems did develop in the early going. There was, however, enough research and evaluation data produced so that fixes could be developed for most problems identified in the earlier COHORT model. The necessary administrative and logistics mechanisms are now in place in supporting field agencies and installation staffs to keep the system working smoothly.²

Paying the COHORT Bill

In the period from 1981 to 1985, most battalions across the U.S. Army were manned at approximately eighty to ninety percent of authorized strength. Even so, the CSA directed that all overseas rotational COHORT battalions would be manned at one hundred percent. The number of soldiers entering the force had not changed, but they were somewhat concentrated in these specified COHORT battalions. As a result, non-COHORT battalions suffered a reduction in percent of personnel fill. The rationale for this decision was that in order to have reliable results from the test, it should be conducted under ideal or "laboratory conditions." Implementation of this decision caused the balance in manning levels to be tilted in favor of COHORT battalions. This inequity gave rise to resistance to COHORT units, a resistance that was felt throughout the rest of the Army.

A second part of this personnel imbalance problem resulted when cadre members in-bound to COHORT units failed to report for their assignment for any one of a myriad of reasons. Some of the reasons given were: cadre diverted to a higher priority assignment; cadre diverted to a high priority school; and family problems. Normally the installation would be required to pull an NCO or officer from a non-COHORT unit on post to fill the vacant position in the COHORT unit. This had the potential of creating serious problems for local

commanders. MG Watts pointed out in an April, 1986, letter that:

The cadre for newly forming COHORT units must be filled and trained prior to arrival of the first term packages. Linked to the point above, is the need to ensure the installation does not "pay the bill" for late or non-arrival of cadre. To do so creates a "have vs have not situation" by which non-COHORT units suffer.³

Panel members of a WRAIR Research Oversight Panel, at a meeting on 28 March, 1986, with LTG Elton, questioned, "Must we rob the non-COHORT Army to build stabilized units?"⁴ The answer to the question is no. "Under the current COHORT Unit Replacement system, COHORT and non-COHORT units on the same installation are maintained at installation/division levels."⁵ Every unit is filled to the same level of authorization without damage to the COHORT program.

Closed Entity

There is an area that still requires study which is at the opposite end of the cohesion building life cycle of a COHORT unit. The question is, "What will happen when a tightly bonded COHORT unit experiences casualties in battle, and requires the inserting of replacement personnel into the unit structure?"⁶ Unfortunately there is little data available on this subject. However, an earlier study indicated that there was a potential problem. WRAIR analyst, LTC Schneider, found in this limited study that:

...COHORT units can rapidly assimilate replacements, just like conventionally organized units, but that small unit leaders paid little attention to developing either horizontal or vertical cohesion. He attributes the failure to the interchangeable part mentality of the American Army which dates from 1917, to implicit rules prescribing informal contacts among leaders and led, and to failure to recognize the importance of small group ties in building and enhancing psychological readiness for combat.⁷

Obviously the problem warrants further study. Some consideration should be given to evaluating the reaction of COHORT unit leaders upon receiving a

replacement squad, crew or platoon. This unit replacement package should report to its new parent COHORT unit with its formal "unit designation" already affixed, e.g., 1st Squad, 2nd Platoon of Company C. This would prevent some problems caused by receiving "ten replacements" instead of a "unit replacement package."

COHORT Prejudice

VRAIR psychologists, and some members of the chain of command, have continuously warned about the reaction of members of non-COHORT units to the "special handling" of COHORT personnel. Despite their best efforts, few have heeded their warnings. What developed was an elite unit syndrome, or "COHORT prejudice." Perceptions of preferential treatment seemed to be at the root of the problem. This was a common problem experienced, for example, when new equipment was fielded only to selected units. Such problems can be kept under control if leaders anticipate them and handle them properly. Unfortunately, reports continue to indicate that many commanders are not using their leadership skills to preclude the problems caused by "COHORT prejudice." The Army After Action Report on COHORT Battalion Rotation indicated that:

...in one community ACS received new supplies because of the rotating battalion, and it was incorrectly believed that they were reserving those items only for that battalion. Housing offices were believed to have actually moved families out of quarters to make room for the rotating battalions...The initial reception of the first rotation of COHORT units was always hostile. This hostility was predicated on the belief that COHORT units were the recipients of special privileges and that these privileges were gained at the expense of members of other units on the posts.⁸

Similar problems with "COHORT prejudice" developed when the 1-41 Infantry rotated from Fort Hood, Texas, to Germany. It was six months before the

personnel of the other battalions completely accepted the COHORT battalion. Resentment ran high among the other units on the post due to rumors that the 1-41 Infantry was getting priority treatment on all housing lists. Rumors that had no validity in fact. In some cases, shortages of certain commodities -- for which the COHORT battalion had no responsibility -- were nonetheless blamed on them. Time proved to be the only thing that was effective in helping people deal with this problem. Most of these problems could have been prevented if the leadership had anticipated the situation and formulated a plan of action. Such a plan would include the development of a well thought out information program before and during rotation, implemented by the receiving chain of command and appropriate staff officers. Such a plan would not be a cure-all, but senior commanders who are skillful in designing and implementing effective information programs of this type are half way there.⁹

Less Advancement for Cadre Members

There is another misperception that is very widespread among officers and non commissioned officers (NCOs) in the Army. Many believe that an assignment to a COHORT unit includes a three year "lock-in" to the unit. They fear that this so-called "lock-in" will allow them less opportunity for upward mobility and career development schooling. A WRAIR survey of NCOs and officers showed:

NCOs also believed that they were "locked-in;" that their careers were in jeopardy; and that their promotions would be slowed or barred. Even junior officers believed that COHORT threatened their careers by denying them the multitude of experiences deemed necessary for advancement.¹⁰

This perception has not proved to be accurate in most cases. Indeed, recent evidence indicates that duty in a COHORT unit is very rewarding for leaders and soldiers, both personally and professionally. Current regulations

and policy guidance encourage commanders to send officers to advanced courses and NCOs to Advanced Non Commissioned Officer Education System (ANCOES) schools during certain assignment windows in the unit's life cycle. "Excluding the initial 12 months stabilization for deploying units, reassignment of soldiers into and out of COHORT units is permitted during assignment windows."¹¹ Commanders are the key to insuring there is a possibility for advancement for all their soldiers. In fact, regulations state that ten percent of the leader slots in a COHORT unit can be filled with soldiers of one rank less than the slot calls for, e.g., E-4 slotted in E-5 position.¹² Also, the commander must look ahead to what the NCO profile of his unit will be in the future. "It takes an attitude of being willing to take the time to find the right soldier not just a soldier...plan ahead to allow the holes to accommodate predictable promotions."¹³

The Soldier Support Center, Fort Benjamin Harrison, has an excellent, exportable training package designed specifically to train COHORT unit cadre members. This training package, entitled "Mindset Training," includes a program of instruction on all the aspects of the COHORT system as it affects the cadre members, their military careers, and their families.

Summary

This chapter has shown that there were some difficulties in the initial phase of implementing the COHORT system throughout the combat arms units of the Army. Some problems of misperception have persisted from the very beginning and continue to this day. The Personnel Management System has implemented various remedies to these problems. Additionally, commanders have been given advice on how they can avoid some of the more basic problems of the COHORT system through proper leadership and management.

CHAPTER III

ENDNOTES

1. Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, U.S. Army, Battalion Rotation After Action Report, 13 August 1987.
2. LTG Robert M. Elton, U.S. Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Letter to Fellow Personnel Managers, 15 March 1987.
3. MG Ronald C. Watts, U.S. Army, Commander, 1st Infantry Division, Letter to Commander Forces Command, 1 April 1986.
4. Department of Military Psychiatry, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. New Manning system Field Evaluation Report No 3, 1 June 1986, p. D-3.
5. Elton, p. 5.
6. Department of Military Psychiatry, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. New Manning System Field Evaluation Report No 3, 1 June 1986, p. D-3.
7. Department of Military Psychiatry, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. New Manning System Field Evaluation Report No 4, 15 December 1986, p. 7.
8. Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Battalion Rotation After Action Report, 13 August 1987, p. D-3.
9. Personal observations of the author when serving as the commander for the 1-41 Infantry.
10. Department of Military Psychiatry, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. New Manning System Field Evaluation Report No 1, 1 November 1985, p. IV-9.
11. Elton, p. 12.
12. AR 600-83 (The New Manning System--COHORT Unit Replacement System), 27 October 1986.
13. Elton, p. 18.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The Army has for many years studied the best way to improve cohesion and reduce personnel turbulence in combat arms units. These studies concluded that many of the solutions were to be found in the COHORT model. Simply put, COHORT units were more cohesive and better trained. These units proved the value of this system under difficult and challenging circumstances. WRAIR researchers described the quality performance of these units as follows:

The COHORT concept works...it simply confirms what all experienced commanders already know: the longer soldiers train together the better they know one another, and the better they perform...despite almost every type of organizational chaos the Army could throw at COHORT units. COHORT units rotated between Europe and CONUS, and remained better bonded than non-COHORT units. COHORT units endured pronounced leader turbulence, and remained better bonded. COHORT units took up new equipment or resumed using old equipment, yet remained better bonded. COHORT units lived with conflicting information, rumors, resentments and local disregard of the DA personnel policies, and remained better bonded. The enhanced horizontal bonding in COHORT units is remarkable because it endures despite events and actions most likely to undermine it. Because it is robust -- in view of the countervailing forces -- the mere presence of differences favoring COHORT is all the more impressive.¹

The most important focus of any peacetime Army program is preparation for the rigors of battle. The COHORT model has produced soldiers and leaders with absolute confidence in themselves, in the other soldiers, and in the unit's ability to perform in battle. There are many examples of testimonies of trust and confidence among COHORT soldiers and leaders that can be cited. One such testimony is reported by WRAIR analyst, Dr. David Marlove, in a 1985 report where he states:

Above all, COHORT commanders felt that they had a truly realistic appreciation of the capacities, the strengths and weaknesses of their soldiers and NCOs...they often expressed it as "I really feel that I know how these guys will do in combat...this was by no means the case

among the conventional (non-COHORT) unit commanders. Almost none felt the sense of knowledge or predictability about their units expressed by their COHORT colleagues; ...In a large number of cases NCOs with prior combat said that if they had to go to war again they would prefer to go with their present COHORT unit.²

The benefits of the COHORT system far outweigh the costs. Even so, there have been certain negative impacts. However, many of these have been overcome or have run their course. The Army system, cumbersome as it is, has responded to most of the problems. Other problems can be avoided by sensitive commanders who carefully design effective information programs and "keep the troops informed."

This paper has shown that there are many favorable aspects of the COHORT model. Soldiers and their families are more stabilized, producing better morale. Training is accomplished with more teamwork and motivation. Units tend to be more combat ready and display more loyalty to their leaders and their unit. Families feel a bond to the unit and to each other. Our thesis was that COHORT is essentially on the right track. Our research shows this to be true.

Decisions by the Army leadership to maintain the COHORT system, with adjustments, are the right ones if we care about the way we manage people. We have captured all the advantages allowed by the COHORT model while minimizing the negative impacts of the system. Maintaining the COHORT system is the right way to go. It serves the Army well in peacetime, and it requires no alteration for transition to war.

CHAPTER IV

ENDNOTES

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2. Department of Military Psychiatry, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. Nav Manning System Field Evaluation Technical Report No 1, 1 November 1985, p. IV-18.
3. Elton Letter.

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